

 For information

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Leading learning and skills

Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council Annual Plan 2006-07

May 2006

Of interest to National, Regional and
Local Learning and Skills Colleagues

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Our Vision

We are pleased to present Staffordshire LSC's Annual Plan for 2006/7.

The area covered by Staffordshire LSC is one of great diversity and includes market towns, isolated rural communities and, in the north, a large urban area with inner city challenges. Our vision for Staffordshire over the next three years must therefore, be sensitive to the needs of each of the district areas and the communities within them. Our aim is to achieve coherent and high quality education and training which can respond effectively to local need and which takes full account of wider regional and national developments and opportunities. The specific needs of the rural economy will be met through improved access to provision. Through effective partnership working we will reach out to target specific groups who are excluded from work because they lack the skills and confidence required by employers.

By 2009, we will have led the development of the sector so that it is even more responsive to current and projected employer and economic demand. 14-19 year olds will be guaranteed an entitlement to a broad range of learning opportunities so that every young person will have a better chance to achieve and progress.

There will be more opportunities for adults to achieve qualifications in the key growth sectors, with better linkages between training and employment.

This Annual Plan builds on the LSC's National Statement of Priorities which was first published in 05/06. It takes account of the objectives outlined in Agenda for Change and is also set within a new funding context, following the publication of our "Priorities for Success" document, which outlines the Government's funding priorities for the sector.

Agenda for Change is shaping both how post 16 education and training is planned and delivered and the way in which the LSC itself will provide the leadership needed to ensure that our goals are reached. Already, we have considerable successes on which to build. We are making good progress towards achieving a "clear line of sight" between national and regional LSC priorities and the plans of individual colleges and learning providers. Through the use of more sophisticated economic intelligence and performance data we are refocusing funding on priority areas where we know that there will be demand for skills at all levels.

Over the last year Staffordshire has made good progress in a number of key areas. In particular, we have continued to exceed the PSA targets around Apprenticeships and we have also seen completion rates improved by 7 percentage points. GCSE 5 A* - Cs have increased in both local authority areas by 4 percentage points. We have also continued to see improvements in year on year FE success rates and an increase in the numbers of adult students participating in full Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

Through our work with partners in the Regeneration Zone and the South Staffordshire Partnership, we will continue to make progress in improving employment rates and in targeted areas, and in supporting the retraining of those who are at risk of redundancy to enable them to move into new and emerging areas of work.

We recognise that we can only deliver our agenda with the proactive engagement and support of key partners. We already have excellent partnerships on which to build 14-19 developments, and through the Local Area Agreements (LAA) we are working closely with both Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Councils to align funding and priorities. We will also work with the emerging Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and employer groups to secure the delivery of training provision that is more responsive to employer needs.

We are pleased to be involved in the development of a life long learning network for the sub-region. Our existing excellent relationships with our local Higher Education providers is a good basis for taking this forward and linking sector needs with higher skills

We believe that central to this vision is a strong commitment to equality and diversity. We will continue to play a leadership role in the sector, promoting and influencing the equality and diversity agenda and celebrating and embracing the diversity within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. We will work with our partners to ensure that our work exceeds the statutory duties placed upon us and that we better encourage employers and learners alike to achieve their full potential in order to contribute to a healthy local economy.

Anne Williams
Chair

Gill Howland
Executive Director

Our Priorities

We have published our second Annual Statement of Priorities which will take us further forward in our aim of transformation. Our six priorities for 2006/07 are to:

1. Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities
2. Make learning truly demand-led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults
3. Transform the learning and skills sector through agenda for change
4. Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help individuals into jobs
5. Improve the skills of workers who are delivering public services
6. Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally

Our Regional Priorities for the West Midlands

The regional priorities outlined demonstrate the LSC's contribution to the work of the Regional Skills Partnership and the delivery and success of the Regional Economic Strategy by:

1. Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills
2. Aligning the supply of training and related support to the needs of individuals
3. Matching the supply of training and related business support to the demands of employers and the wider economy
4. Ensuring that employers and individuals fulfil their role in the investment in skills and training

To achieve these priorities, the LSC in the West Midlands will continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders across the region through the alignment of plans and funding. Key partners include:

- Advantage West Midlands
- Jobcentre Plus
- Sector Skills Councils (SSC)
- Higher Education (HE) Institutions/Higher Education Funding Council
- Business Link

Learning Priorities – the impact on Providers

Colleges and providers are at the heart of delivering these regional priorities. Actions agreed in their three year development plans will address the priorities outlined in the local LSC Annual Plan and will ensure that funding is focused upon key areas. Successful delivery depends upon high quality provision that is:

- Closely engaged with employers to understand their needs
- Aligned to the skills priorities of the region
- Can meet the required range of specialist skills across the region
- Central to the delivery of the regional and local economic agenda
- Aligned with the work of other partners to deliver an accessible and comprehensive service to employers and individuals
- Able to develop and exploit opportunities for leveraging in increased levels of investment by employers into training
- Providing learning and skills opportunities that lead to nationally recognised qualifications and opportunities for progression
- Committed to continuous quality improvement and the attainment of recognised accreditation standards

Planning Priorities for 2006/07 – West Midlands Region

The following planning principles were agreed through the Regional LSC/FE/AoC Consultative Forum to be applied against the allocations for 06/07:

- A minimum of 60% accredited Skills for Life provision as a milestone towards the 80% target for 2007/08
- A maximum of 10% partnership, sub contracted or franchised provision (if current level is below 10%, there should be no increase)
- A minimum of 10% of the Adult participation budget, at the level of the individual (general) FE college, to support activity that delivers full level 2 qualifications to part-time adults, with a year on year increase in funding committed to part-time adult full level 2 provision (guide of 5%)
- The LLSC will agree with each provider a proportion of this funding that will be committed to Train to Gain type activity
- Increase in participation of adults on full level 3 qualifications to a 10% minimum in areas of Specialisms/CoVEs

Our Targets

Under priority 1, for young people:

- Increase the proportion of 19 year-olds who achieve at least Level 2 by 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and improve attainment at Level 3.

Nationally we need an additional 31,000 young people to gain a Level 2 in 2005/06 compared to 2003/04 and a further 22,000 in 2007/08 compared to 2005/2006.

Locally we need an additional 426 young people to gain a Level 2 in 2007/08 compared to 2005/06.

Under priority 2, for adults:

- Reduce by at least 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010.

Nationally, in 2006/07 we need to increase the numbers of full Level 2 achievements through Further Education and Work-based Learning to 117,000 [NB excludes NES and NETP elements]. In addition the roll out of the National Employer Training Programme will increase the LSC contribution to this target.

Locally we plan to deliver 3000 full Level 2 achievements through Further Education and Work-based Learning in 2006/07, that is an increase of 500 compared to 2005/06,

In addition, we will also deliver 725 **first** full Level 2 achievements through Train to Gain.

Under priority 2, for adults:

- Improve the basic skills of 2.25 million adults between 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007.

Locally we need 6000 learners to achieve Skills for Life qualifications in 2006/07.

Underpinning both priorities 1 and 2, for Apprenticeships:

- The LSC has agreed a new Performance Indicator for Apprenticeships. The aim is for 75 per cent more people to complete their Apprenticeships in 2007/08, compared to 2002/03.

Nationally we aim to raise the number of completions to 70,000 in 2006/07 supporting the achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 qualification targets.

Locally we aim to raise the number of completions to 1087 in 2006/07.

We also work with key partners to contribute to the following targets:

- Increase the proportion of young people and adults achieving a Level 3 qualification.
- Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) by two percentage points by 2010
- Increase participation in HE towards 50 per cent of those aged 18 to 30 by 2010.

Our Values

Our values set out for us the way we work.

- **Trust:** the LSC has to be world-class at partnership and so we believe trust must be at the heart of the LSC.
- **Expertise:** we demonstrate expertise and true leadership in every aspect of our work. We have complete understanding of the communities we serve and of what is needed by business in terms of current and future skills.
- **Ambition:** we are ambitious for ourselves, in the goals and objectives we set, but more importantly we are ambitious for the communities we serve, for employers and for individuals in education and training.
- **Urgency:** we want to bring drive and urgency to the learning and skills sector, to tackle long-standing issues swiftly and professionally and to be responsive and fast moving.

Together, our four values will ensure the LSC can provide leadership and direction at a time of great change.

Our plan sets out how we will deliver our national and regional priorities in a local context highlighting what actions will be critically important in local delivery and what our contribution to the national targets will be.

A Context for Delivery

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent covers a large geographical area rich in diversity and with a proud heritage. The area boasts numerous urban centres with a wealth of historic buildings and areas of deep rurality which include areas of outstanding natural beauty. Once famous the world over for its ceramics industry and a major centre for coal mining, manufacturing and engineering, the area did not fare well throughout the recession of the 1980s. The resultant legacy is one of sluggish economic growth and sizeable pockets of severe social deprivation in both urban and rural locations and particularly within Stoke-on-Trent. Strategies for social and economic regeneration between 2000 and 2004 show mixed outcomes for the districts within the Staffordshire LSC area.

Index of multiple deprivation (IMD) for Staffordshire LSC districts 2000 and 2004

District	Ranking 2000	Ranking 2004	Change in ranking
Stoke-on-Trent	34	18	-16
Cannock Chase	121	134	13
East Staffordshire	157	155	-2
Lichfield	253	259	6
Newcastle-under-Lyme	138	138	0
South Staffordshire	256	265	9
Stafford	258	244	-14
Staffordshire Moorlands	190	182	-8
Tamworth	132	145	13

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

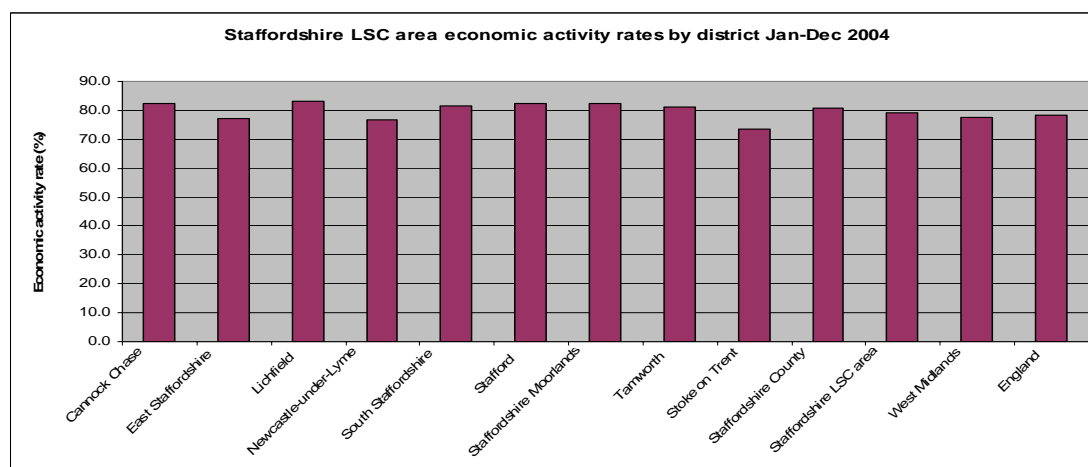
Ranking out of 354 districts: 1 = most deprived, 354 = least deprived.

The most marked change is for Stoke-on-Trent and it is likely that the worsening position reflects a continued decline in some of the most disadvantaged wards in the city. Using this measure, Stoke-on-Trent is now amongst the 5% most disadvantaged districts in England. The improved position of Cannock and Tamworth is welcome and indicates that the development of the M6 Toll corridor is having a positive impact. Although Stafford has experienced a significant negative change in its ranking, it remains in the top third of districts nationally.

Building the skills base across the area is one of the key pre-requisites for delivering economic prosperity with social inclusion. A well skilled workforce will assist local authorities and others seeking to attract inward investment and will increase the likelihood of local people being able to benefit from any new jobs that are created. Equally, a well skilled workforce will assist existing businesses to develop and grow, bringing increased wealth and job opportunities to the area. The LSC has a pivotal role to play in facilitating and supporting partnership approaches to boosting learning and skills across the area.

Economic Activity

Whilst overall the proportion of people in work is in line with national norms, this masks significant variance between districts. Activity rates of 83% in Lichfield are well above the national average, whereas much lower levels exist in Stoke-on-Trent. Twice as many of the inactive in Stoke-on-Trent are in receipt of sickness and incapacity related benefits as is the case in the Staffordshire County. Inactivity rates are particularly marked amongst the 50 years old to retirement age group in Stoke-on-Trent where 40% are inactive compared to only 25% of the same age group in the County. A similar pattern pertains for unemployment rates. Across the area as a whole, unemployment is generally low and in line with national norms. In Stoke-on-Trent, however, unemployment rates exceed 3% and two of Staffordshire's districts (Tamworth and Cannock) have unemployment rates of 2%. (NOMIS)



Source : Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec 2004

Progress

The North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone Board has prioritised action to reduce economic inactivity rates and unemployment. Supporting adults into employment is seen as the top priority for combating poverty and social exclusion and for supporting economic development. As a board member of the Regeneration Zone, the LSC contributes actively to this agenda. Working closely with Jobcentre Plus we avoid duplication and optimise the impact of interventions. Similarly, the LSC is an Executive Member of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership which ensures that interventions in the South of the County are co-ordinated.

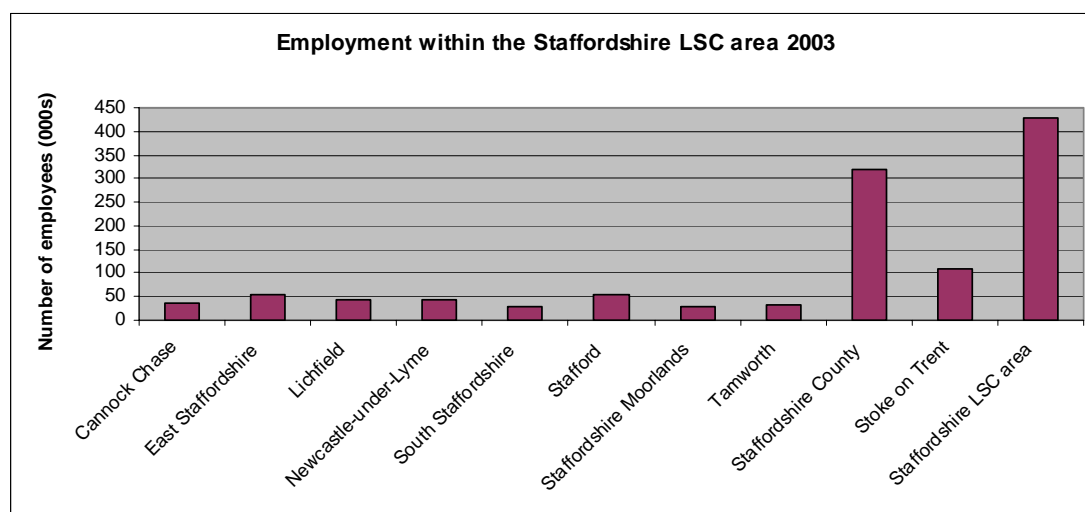
Within mainstream budgets, priority has been given to investment which increases and widens participation and provides a platform for employment. Over 17,000 adults followed Skills for Life programmes in 2004-05 and 11% of the adult FE participation budget in Staffordshire was used to deliver full Level 2 qualifications in 2004-05 compared to a regional average of 7%.

In addition, European Social Funds (ESF) and Local Initiative Development Funds (LIDF) have been used to provide pre-employment training for adults who are unemployed or under the threat of redundancy. These projects have defined spatial targets linked to districts with higher rates of unemployment

and inactivity, e.g. Burton, Cannock and Stoke-on-Trent. Managed and delivered by the Trade Union, Unity, and the Staffordshire Consortium, this programme has assisted 860 learners at Levels 1, 2 and 3 and assisted 170 individuals back into employment.

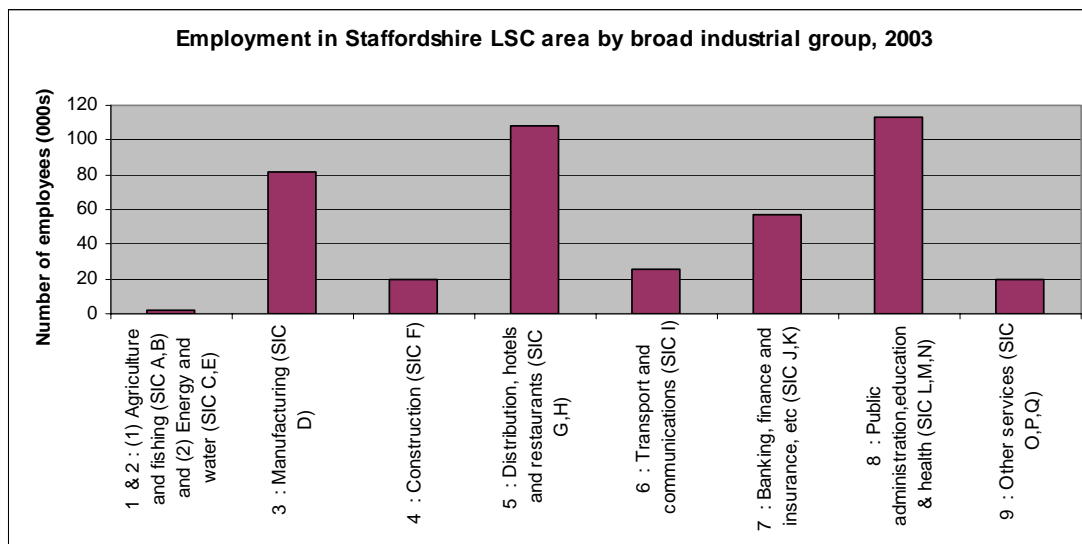
Labour Market Structure

Stoke-on-Trent is the largest population centre in the LSC area, accounting for around a quarter of the total population and also represents the largest local labour market, with around 109,000 jobs in 2003. Stafford district and East Staffordshire (which include the urban centres of Stafford town and Burton upon Trent, respectively) are the next largest.



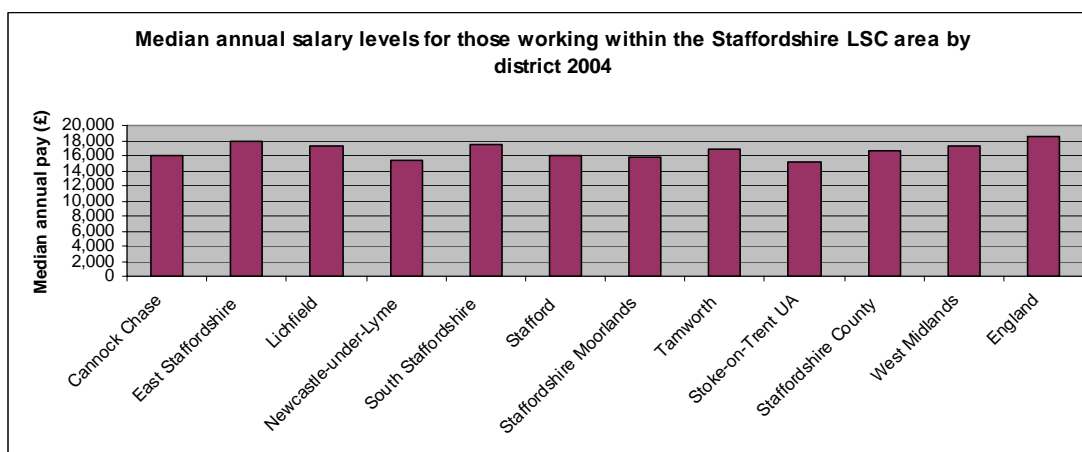
Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2003, National on-Line Manpower Information System (NOMIS)

Despite a dramatic decline, a significantly larger proportion of local people continue to earn their living from manufacturing than is typical across the country. Overall 19% of all employees work in manufacturing, compared with just over 12% for England. This reflects a wider reliance on manufacturing for the whole West Midlands economy (18%), and is most marked in Stoke-on-Trent, where 23% of employees work in manufacturing. The higher reliance on manufacturing employment is a reflection that fewer new job opportunities have come into the area than is typical nationally and this, in turn, reflects on the low skill levels which exist in significant sections of the labour force.



Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2003, National on-Line Manpower Information System (NOMIS)

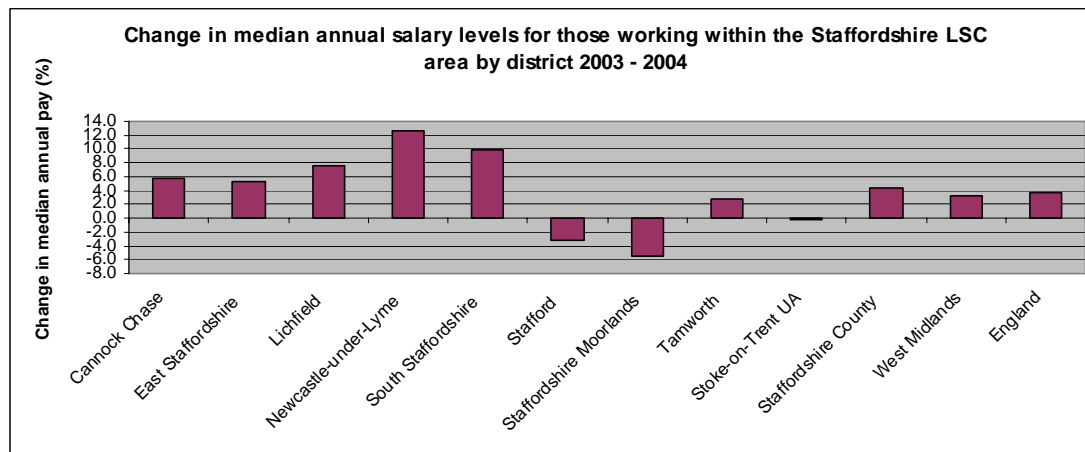
Rates of pay across the area are lower than national norms in all Staffordshire districts. In Staffordshire the median pay rate in 2004 was £1,800pa lower than national levels and for Stoke-on-Trent the shortfall was £3,300pa. For two districts, Stafford and Staffordshire Moorlands, pay rates actually fell between 2003 and 2004.



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Office for National Statistics)

Sour

Newcastle-under-Lyme has had the greatest increase in pay rates between 2003 and 2004, but still remains the second lowest paid district in the local area.



Source

ce: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Office for National Statistics)

Progress

The Staffordshire Skills Alliance, led by the LSC provides a strategic lead for skills investment and partnership activity across the area. The needs of the economy and priority sectors are reflected in the Strategy and Manifesto for Action. Business and Professional Services, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing, Health and Care, Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism and Public Services were identified as priority sectors for action in 2005/06. These priorities were reflected in dialogue and planning meetings with providers

Building on this activity and in preparation for the 2006/07 planning round, work was undertaken to better align investment with priorities. A review of the emerging Skills for Business Network and the Working Futures II Study, plus an analysis of supply side volumes and performance was carried out. This resulted in a further refinement of priority sectors and the inclusion of retail as a priority sector. The clearer articulation of priorities has been shared with strategic partners and the delivery network and formed the basis for the 2006/07 Planning and Procurement Document, which is driving the current planning round.

We have identified eight priority occupational areas which between them account for 128,000 of the total requirement of 193,000 job opportunities to 2014 i.e. two thirds of the total. It should be noted that the forecasts used will under-estimate the volume of construction opportunities as they do not specifically factor in the implications of Regeneration Zone status and the Housing Market Renewal projects in North Staffordshire.

Sectors	Change in Demand 2004-2014 000's	Replacement Demand 2004-2014 000's	Total Requirement 000's
Business & Public Services (Non SSC Employers)	12	26	38
Retail (Skillsmart)	5	19	23
Health (Skills for Health)	5	13	18
Leisure/Tourism/Hospitality (People 1st)	2	12	13
Skills for Care & Development	3	7	10
ICT (e-Skills UK)	7	4	10
Engineering/Manufacture (SEMTA)	-4	12	8
Construction (Construction Skills)	-3	10	8

Analysis of funded vocational provision in 2004-05 shows that 80,680 learners followed vocational programmes.

- A third of learners followed programmes at Level 1 and a further third followed Level 2 programmes. 20% followed programmes at Level 3 and 12% at Levels 4/5.
- Some 70% of learners on vocational programmes were pursuing qualifications within the eight priority sectors for Staffordshire.
- Generally, across all sectors the largest areas of employment growth/replacement are in occupations which require either Level 2 qualifications or Levels 4/5. Consequently, priority will be given to ensuring that learners on Level 1 programmes progress to Level 2 and that the provider network increases the volume of Level 3 programmes in order to support progression to Levels 4 and 5.
- Whilst many providers have made improvements in recent years the overall achievement/success rates are often improving more slowly than in other parts of the country and/or remain below benchmark levels. Whilst WbL is now largely performing well against benchmark, the Apprenticeship benchmark levels themselves are very low in some occupational sectors.

The Employer Skills Offer (ESO), delivered by Business Link, has provided a mechanism to engage directly with 160 employers in priority sectors to identify skills issues and make referrals to key programmes. However, this programme has under performed in Staffordshire and the West Midlands. As a result, referral and start targets will not be achieved. In response, we have undertaken development activity with Business Link, the FE and private provider network.

This has included joint communication sessions, the development of an integrated business and skills diagnostic based on the DTI Benchmark Plus tool and broker skills training.

We have developed a network of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) which align to our priority sectors. An evaluation of the network during 2005 indicated that overall the total numbers of Level 3 learners had increased, employer engagement had improved and full cost recovery work was above previous levels. However, it is recognised that quality improvements are required in some parts of the network.

14-19 Learners

Results at Key Stage 4 show an improving picture overall, though a number of districts still perform below the England average and effort must continue to be focussed there. Equally, like many areas across England, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent results show a significantly lower level of performance by males. The introduction of the new ways of measuring performance, including Maths and English will be of interest in 2006/07. Currently the numbers achieving 5A*-C GCSE passes, including Maths and English, are significantly lower than the figures given in the national performance tables for some districts within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Key Stage 4 results within Staffordshire LSC area – by district

District	Key Stage 4 attainment 5+ A* - C District Average %				
	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Cannock ¹	37.2	40.3	45.4	42.7	48.9
East Staffordshire ¹	48.3	54.4	55.2	52.0	56.7
Lichfield ¹	55.5	54.2	55.2	54.5	53.9
Newcastle-under-Lyme ¹	43.7	45.9	48.0	48.0	50.8
South Staffordshire ¹	55.1	55.9	57.1	54.4	57.5
Stafford ¹	51.7	49.5	52.3	50.7	55.3
Staffordshire Moorlands ¹	54.5	60.4	59.7	59.9	62.9
Tamworth ¹	41.5	38.8	37.6	42.6	44.9
Stoke-on-Trent LA Area ³	35.6	38.6	46.1	43.6	48.0 ²
Staffordshire LA Area ³	48.2	50.1	51.5	51.0	n/a
England Average ³	50.0	51.6	52.9	53.7	n/a

source:

¹ Staffordshire Local Authority

² Stoke-on-Trent Local Authority

³ DfES Secondary School Performance Tables (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004)

Note - Data from DfES is not directly comparable to that of Staffordshire LA or Stoke-on-Trent LA.

2004 and 2005 data sourced from Staffordshire LA and Stoke-on-Trent LA is provisional/unvalidated.

Note - Figures for Stoke-on-Trent LA Area for 2005 are sourced from Stoke LA and are therefore not directly comparable to figures for previous years which are sourced from DfES.

Note - n/a not available

Historically, 16-18 participation in the Staffordshire LSC area has been higher than for England as a whole. However, participation levels vary between districts. Year

11 destinations data from Connexions indicated an improvement for 2004 of numbers staying in structured learning in most of the districts. Participation is particularly high in South Staffordshire and Lichfield, while concerns remain in Cannock Chase.

Proportion of Staffordshire LSC area year 11 leavers continuing with structured learning

District	% continuing with structured learning			Change 2002 - 2004
	2002	2003	2004	
Cannock Chase	79.4	85.0	82.6	3.2
East Staffordshire	84.7	84.5	86.6	1.9
Lichfield	92.0	89.9	92.0	0
Newcastle-under-Lyme	88.4	87.4	87.5	-0.9
South Staffordshire	91.8	91.0	92.7	0.9
Stafford	89.9	89.2	88.4	-1.5
Staffordshire Moorlands	90.8	86.0	88.2	-2.6
Tamworth	87.0	87.1	87.3	0.3
Stoke-on-Trent	79.1	83.2	83.6	4.5
Staffordshire LSC area	85.5	86.4	86.8	1.3

Source: Connexions Staffordshire annual school leaver activity survey

Progress

The original Public Service Agreement (PSA) target was to reduce, by 10 percentage points, the number of young people 16-18 who were NEET. For the Staffordshire LSC area that meant reducing the numbers NEET to 10% by 2004. The updated PSA target is now to reduce the numbers NEET to 7.5% by 2006 and to 5.5% by 2010

This target was exceeded. In 2004 NEET stood at 8.5%. This masked significant differences between Staffordshire County (6.6%) and Stoke-on-Trent (14.6%). Entry to Employment (e2e) progression rates improved from 34% in 2003/04 to 47.5% in 2004/05. Progression to Apprenticeships improved from 9% in 2003/04 to 17% in 2004/05.

Early indications for 2005 suggest that NEET rates in November 2005, for those who left school in July 2005, are the same as for the previous year. This however masks a difference between Staffordshire County and Stoke-on-Trent where NEET rates were respectively a decrease of 0.3% and an increase of 1.4%. Participation in full-time education by Year 11 school leavers increased by two percentage points in 2005 but participation in WbL reduced by 0.7%. Furthermore, early indications are that retention of learners at 17 remains a problem and have caused NEET rates overall to rise in 2005.

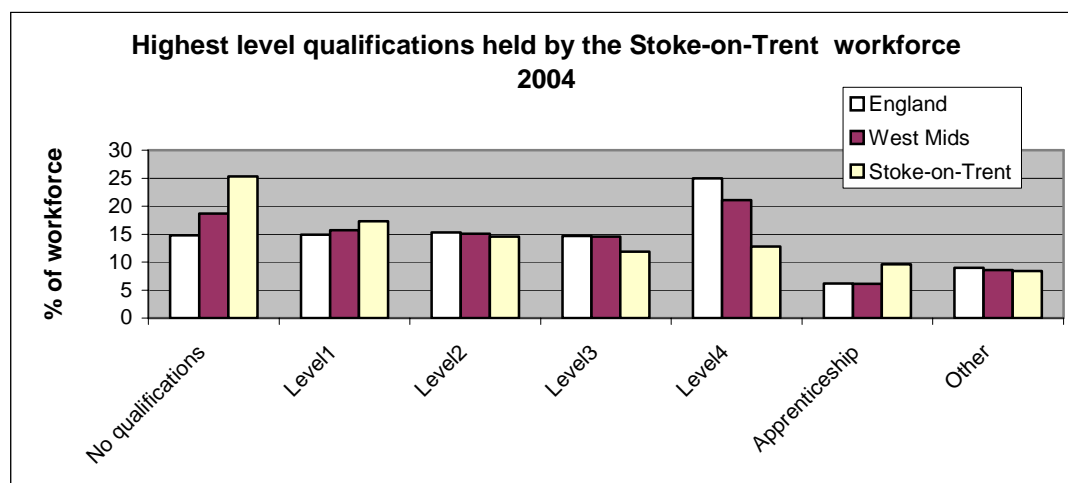
The PSA target is to increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least a Level 2 by 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2006 and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and increasing the proportion of young people who achieve a Level 3. In 2004, 9,099 young people had reached Level 2 by the age of 19, i.e. – this represented 64% of the cohort. Data for 2005 is yet to be finalised. The Staffordshire target for 2006 is 67%

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Grant Letter required the LSC to increase by 75% the numbers of young people achieving Apprenticeships. The 2002/03 baseline for Staffordshire is 940 and the 75% increase requires 1,645 Apprenticeships in 2007/08. To date performance is very encouraging. Achievements in 2003/04 were 1,105; in 2004-05 were 1,301. Planned achievements for 2005/06 are 1,698.

Significant progress has been made over the last year in developing and strengthening collaborative arrangements at district level between providers in the local area. These collaborative groups are working towards bringing together individually planned provision into a single, unified curriculum, guidance and progression framework. Good progress is being made in driving forward a coordinated approach to timetabling and curriculum design to develop a comprehensive, cost effective and high quality range of choices for every 14-19 year old learner.

Adult Learners

For the West Midlands region there are proportionately fewer in the workforce who hold the highest level qualifications (Level 4 and Level 5) than for England as a whole, and this is reflected in the Staffordshire LSC area also. Fewer than 20% of the local workforce are qualified to Level 4 or above, compared with a quarter nationally. Similarly, a larger proportion holds no qualifications (18%, compared with 15% nationally). The proportion of the workforce holding Level 2 and the Level 3 qualifications is broadly the same for the LSC area as for the West Midlands and England (just over 15% and 14% respectively). A larger proportion locally have served trade Apprenticeships (7.6% compared to 6.1% regionally and 6.2% nationally), reflecting the local reliance on traditional manufacturing industries.



Source: labour force survey March 2003- February 2004

The workforce of Stoke-on-Trent has significantly lower levels of qualifications than in the rest of the LSC area, or in the region or in England as a whole. According to the latest Labour Force Survey, some 25% of the workforce hold no qualifications representing a very slight improvement on previous estimates of

26%, but still a poor position overall. Proportionately, only half as many Stoke-on-Trent workers hold a Level 4 or Level 5 qualification, as compared to workers in England as a whole (12.8% compared to 25%).



Source: labour force survey March 2003- February 2004

The high proportion of workers with no qualifications is matched by high incidences of poor basic skills. The exact proportion of workers with basic skills difficulties is difficult to quantify, and the West Midlands Observatory's *State of the Region Report 2004* notes that there is presently an absence of reliable information on basic skills needs. However, the Basic Skills Agency has estimated that up to a quarter of the population of Stoke-on-Trent lack functional literacy and numeracy skills.

Progress

A key priority of the Staffordshire Skills Alliance is to improve leadership and management skills. A Leadership and Management Strategy detailing actions has been developed and will be launched in March 2006. A Director Development Programme is in place and has, to date, assisted 435 directors and senior managers to review their development needs and implement training plans.

Partnership working with the provider base (which includes Adult and Community Learning (ACL), Voluntary and Community Service (VCS), FE and private providers) has ensured that improvement targets for adult attainment are clearly defined and understood.

The analysis of adult participation data indicates that 82,965 adults participated in learning with FE Colleges and ACL providers in 2004-05. This represents an increase of 4,892 on the previous year.

Within FE, 8% of adult learners in Staffordshire were studying Full Level 2 programmes in 2004-05 and this accounted for 11% of the adult FE budget. This compares well to the West Midlands average of 5% of learners and 7% of funds. Participation rates on Full Level 3 programmes across the Staffordshire LSC area are in line with the West Midlands average of 3%

of adult learners and 4% of the Adult FE budget.

The PSA target is to improve the basic skills of 2.25 million adults between 2001 and 2010 – with a milestone of 1.5 million by 2007. For Staffordshire the milestone for 2007 is 18,062. West Midlands region achieved 98% of the 2004 milestone; Staffordshire achieved only 93% of its 2004 milestone. In 2004/05, in Staffordshire, 17,504 learners were following Skills for Life programmes across *learn direct*, ESF, Employer Training Pilot (ETP) and FE. Only 6,170 (35%) of these were on programmes which, if the student passed, would count towards the target. The balance between students on programmes counting towards target and those on programmes which do not, varies greatly between providers and needs to be addressed.

Additional resource to improve basic skills has been made available to three providers through participation in the national basic skills pilot, designed to work with employers to identify and respond to basic skills needs amongst the workforce. This work was extended locally using Local Initiative Funds and, overall, supported an additional 586 learners to achieve Skills for Life qualifications.

As a non ETP pilot area, ESF resources have been used to target individuals who have not achieved a first Level 2 qualification. The programme will deliver 1000 first Level 2 qualifications between 2005/08. To date 40 individuals have started on the programme. Whilst participation rates for the programme are improving, providers report that a number of individuals working in new and growing sectors are ineligible for support because they have already achieved a first Level 2 qualification relevant to a declining occupational sector.

At Level 3, the ESF Adult Apprenticeship programme will support 150 individuals between 2005/08. To date there have been 54 starts on the programme.

The partnership with the Probation Service is developing well across the area and, at period 9, 643 offenders had accessed Skills for Life provision and two thirds of these had achieved a qualification (112% of target).

Skills Matrix

Under 19	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	26,209,046 33080	51%	9,960,979 9721	19%	4,566,786 2583	9%	40,736,812 45384	79%
Potential to contribute	2,899,525 4191	6%	771,821 1410	1%	157,930 317	0%	3,829,276 5918	7%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	533,628 1713	1%	113,276 134	0%	82,233 817	0%	729,137 2664	1%
Other (eg UFI and Unclassified)	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%
Entitlement	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	6,466,194 N/A	12%	6,466,194 N/A	12%
Totals	29,642,199 38984	57%	10,846,076 11265	21%	11,273,143 3717	22%	51,761,419 53966	100%

19 and Over	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	17,683,422 41390	45%	3,078,856 5463	8%	2,242,165 3080	6%	22,984,443 49933	59%
Potential to contribute	10,726,885 33369	27%	2,302,643 3851	6%	922,109 4145	2%	13,951,637 41365	36%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	1,531,651 11343	4%	49,026 280	0%	407,604 7709	1%	1,988,281 19332	5%
Other (eg UFI and Unclassified)	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%
Entitlement	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	205,351 N/A	1%	205,351 N/A	1%
Totals	29,921,959 86102	76%	5,430,524 9594	14%	3,777,228 14934	10%	39,129,711 110630	100%

NB percentages are funding values as a percentage of the total funds, for each age group

The key changes needed

- ❖ Change the mix and balance of provision to reflect the needs of priority sectors by improving quality (success rates) where it is at or below benchmark and investing volume growth where quality is above benchmark.

Planned improvements to success rates of provision which are at or below benchmark 04/05 – 06/07

Sector	Changes required 16-18		19+	
	From	To	From	To
Construction	47	55	58	66
Retail & Commercial	61	67	73	78
Engineering & Manufacturing	54	60	69	77

Planned changes in enrolments 04/05 – 06/07

Sector	19+	
	From	To
Construction – level 2 & 3	1500	2100+ (with increased OSAT L2 & L3)
Business & Admin – level 3	1383	1600
Health & Public service – level 2 & 3	3794	4432
Retail & Commercial – level 2 & 3	2958	1910 (reduction due to change in regional funding)
Leisure, Travel & Tourism – level 2 & 3	662	740
Engineering & Manufacturing	1162	1500
ICT	1724	1900

- ❖ Set differentiated improvement targets within 2006/07 provider development plans in order to make a step change in quality and performance levels across Staffordshire. Targets to be set following dialogue meetings Spring 2006.

- ❖ Increase priority sector employers investing in skills development through 'Train to Gain'.

Increase in number of employers investing in skills development 2006/07.

Sector		
	From (04/05 Skills offer)	To (06/07 Train to Gain offer)
Construction	42	100
Business & Professional	64	93
Health & Public service & Care	44	80
Retail & Commercial	13	100
Leisure, Travel & Tourism	20	70
Engineering & Manufacturing	99	140
Transport & Logistics	8	50

- ❖ Pilot new ways of tackling the NEET group in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme where rates are outside the range which will allow the PSA target to be achieved.
- ❖ Sustain low NEET levels across the County and specifically reduce NEET group in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme to below 9% by end 2006.
- ❖ Contribute to a major pilot project under the Stoke-on-Trent LAA to target multi-agency approaches in the ward of Meir to reduce economic inactivity and raise participation and attainment amongst both young people and adults. Project to be enacted 2006/09.
- ❖ Require providers to track students who will be 19 in 2006, reduce drop out rates, target additional support and thereby achieve the target. The target is to increase the proportion of 19 year olds achieving Level 2 from 64% (03/04) to 67% in (05/06).
- ❖ Improve the Level 3 performance of School 6th Forms and FE network to national benchmark levels. For FE to 64% success rate and for Schools 6th Forms to an average points score of 277.6 per student and 79.9 per entry.
- ❖ Work with Skills for Life providers to improve their current success rates By July 2007 the current Skills for Life conversion rate (starters; achievers) of 1:3 is reduced to 1:2.4.

- ❖ Transform our CoVEs to become leaders of inclusive networks of specialist providers compliant with new Quality Mark and delivering priority qualifications at Level 3 and above.
- ❖ Take a leading role with funding and educational partners in the Stoke-on-Trent University Quarter initiative to create a high profile learning development to promote HE progression, attainment and raise educational aspirations. The aim is to make a symbolic and major contribution to the landscape of the area so that ultimately LSC targets for participation, economic activity, attainment and HE participation can be achieved and become a reality.
- ❖ Drive forward the aims of the 2005/10 LSC National Capital Strategy which seeks to challenge the FE sector to develop world-class buildings for world-class teaching and learning. Recent studies have shown that there is an estimated capital investment requirement of £164.25 million to bring the FE estates in Staffordshire up to the required national standard. Over the next five years we aim to take forward a program of estates renewal, aligned to demand for provision, and to meet the required national standards for capital estates by 2010. This includes some major rebuilds and extra funding sourced from multi-agency/private sector innovation.

Sector Skill Agreements (SSAs) from regional office

The LSC's commitment within the SSA is to ensure that the provision purchased addresses the skills priorities within the Agreements. The following priority qualifications/areas have been identified:

- On-site Assessment and Training (OSAT)
- Business Improvement Techniques (BIT)
- Information Technology Qualification (ITQ)
- School support staff

1. Construction Skills

The OSAT delivery model for construction provision has been one of the most successful sector pilots. National funding will not continue beyond September 2006 and OSAT delivery now needs to be incorporated into mainstream provision. The figures identified below are the Construction Skills projections for the number of workers requiring an NVQ Level 2 within the region.

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
W. Midlands	3,214	4,046	3,503	3,503

2. SEMTA

UK companies lag behind competitors on the implementation of lean manufacturing and high performance working particularly SMEs. SEMTA have

identified the BIT NVQ as a key qualification in their Agreement which will progressively replace the NVQs in Performing Engineering Manufacture.

The figures identified below are the projections for the number of employees requiring an NVQ Level 2 and 3 within the region over the coming year.

Region	L2	L3
W. Midlands	10,800	1,350

3. E- Skills

The SSA priorities focus on Level 2 and above for IT users and Level 3 and above for IT professionals delivered through ITQ. This provides a highly flexible framework to enable individuals to achieve a qualification. It is intended that ITQ will replace all IT User qualifications by September 2006. The target ITQ is for 750,000 ITQ by 2008 and the regional target is shown below.

Region	06/07	07/08
W. Midlands	17,600	22,400

4. Additional Priorities – School support staff

School support staff work across a number of occupational areas, often with multiple roles. Job roles include administrators, teaching assistants, technicians and pupil supervisors.

The figures identified below are the sector's projections for the number of employees requiring an NVQ Level 2 within the region over the next two years 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Region	06/07	07/08
W. Midlands	1550	1550

What we have delivered so far and our planned changes for 2006/07 (sheet 1 of 2)

SUMMARY OF YOUNG PEOPLE (16-18)	2004/05				Funding £
	Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates		
	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)			
FE Total Learners	15659		69%		49,596,977
of which...					
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	6469	3168	68%		
Learners on a full Level 2 qualification	3300	1658	62%		
Learners on a full Level 3 qualification	5366	2873	72%		
Learners on 2 or more A2 qualis	914	775	86%		
Discrete* activity, e.g. fully ESF, or LIDF funded provision	1,526	1,015	n/a		
School sixth form	7875				35,254,426
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement /12 month AiL		Funding £
WBL Total Learners	2882			42%	11,710,000
of which...					
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	4200	-	-		
Learners on an Apprenticeship	2126	731	42%		
Learners on an Advanced Apprenticeship	611	116	39%		
Entry to Employment	Learners				Funding £
	Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)	Pos've destinations	
All E2E	1549	915	24.4	474	6,663,100

2005/06				
Learners			Funding £	
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	Learning Aims Success Rates		
15703		71%	57,017,732	
6877	3500	71%		
3840	1900	64%		
5750	3279	74%		
971	816	87%		
677	592	n/a		
7975			38,289,991	
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £	
3498		44%	11,113,357	
4573	-	-		
2589	844	45%		
840	160	43%		
Learners			Funding £	
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)		Pos've destinations
1600	950	22	500	6,909,520

2006/07				
Learners				Funding £
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	Learning Aims Success Rates		
15866		74%		61,133,191
7205	3860	73%		
4062	2046	66%		
5926	3410	75%		
1001	822	88%		
571	608	n/a		
7975				39,262,451
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL		Funding £
3300		49%		12,536,703
4650	-	-		
2442	994	50%		
792	185	46%		
Learners				Funding £
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)	Pos've destinations	
1600	950	22	582	5,166,903

Green header indicates underpinning data is complete

Red header indicates underpinning data is incomplete

What we have delivered so far and our planned changes for 2006/07 (sheet 2 of 2)

SUMMARY OF ADULTS (19+)	2004/05			
	Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
FE Total Learners	69395		74%	40,151,023
<i>of which...</i>				
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	3798	2187	82%	
Learners on a full Level 2 qualification	6472	3545	54%	
Learners on a full Level 3 qualification	3035	1274	43%	
Learners on 2 or more A2 qual.	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Discrete* activity, eg fully ESF, or LIDF funded provision	4157	3224	n/a	
Personal & Community Dev't Learning	29810			3,429,531
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £
WBL Total Learners	2074		37%	5,826,000
<i>of which...</i>				
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	-	-	-	
Learners on an Apprenticeship	1009	369	39%	
Learners on an Advanced Apprenticeship	881	172	32%	
ETP / NETP	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		Funding £
<i>Of which...</i>				
Level 2		0	0	0
Skills for Life		0	0	0

2005/06			
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
58735		75%	37,764,577
4169	2571	83%	
6372	3800	62%	
3127	1460	60%	
n/a	n/a	n/a	
8183	3935	n/a	
25806			3,419,531
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £
1892		40%	4,373,699
-	-	-	
1003	300	42%	
795	130	35%	
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		Funding £
0			0
0			0

2006/07			
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
59773		77%	35,197,772
4718	2917	85%	
6723	3890	64%	
3078	1458	61%	
n/a	n/a	n/a	
5673	3161		
25342			3,136,520
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £
1800		42%	3,789,292
-	-	-	
954	365	45%	
756	153	38%	
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		Funding £
900		725	£980,000
1033		742	£619,800

*tba = figures not available at time of production –these figures can be obtained direct from the local or regional office

Budgets	FE	WBL	E2E	SSF	ACL	ETP/NETP	Development Funding	Capital	Administration	Other Programme Budgets
2004/05	89,748,000	17,536,000	6,663,100	35,254,426	3,429,531	0	2,126,342	1,434,529	2,164,955	11,259,117
2005/06	94,782,309	15,487,056	6,909,520	38,289,991	3,419,531	0	2,378,523	772,000	2,242,000	6,262,070
2006/07	96,330,963	17,133,097	5,166,903	39,261,228	3,136,520	1,599,800	1,275,953	tba*	tba*	tba*

Key actions

Priority	Plan	Measures of success
<p>Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills</p> <p>Aligning the supply of training and related support to the needs of individuals</p>	<p>Continued improvements in participation at 16 remain a priority across the area and particularly for Stoke-on-Trent. In order to provide a strategic lead in this area we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the 14-19 Strategy is aligned with the LA Children and Young People's Plans of both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. 2. Work with the partners and providers in Stoke-on-Trent to explore the potential to pilot new curriculum offers and delivery strategies to engage and retain hard to reach young people. Also, work through the 14-19 colleges and collaboratives to utilise opportunities for ESF support to develop innovative strategies for disaffected 14-16 year olds 3. Work with partners and providers in Stoke-on-Trent to develop more effective strategies for retention and progression of those young people most at risk of dropping out at 17 4. Implement an extensive and innovative pilot in the North Staffordshire area to address the language deficit experienced by many young people and which we believe significantly affects progression at 17 and the achievement of the Level 2 at 19 PSA target 5. Develop a strategy for the sustainability of 14-19 collaboratives and colleges as development funds are reduced/removed 6. Support the development of Vocational Skills Centres to extend facilities to support curriculum broadening and the development of Specialist Diplomas 7. Extend to schools opportunities to achieve subject membership of the Vocational Skills Academy 8. Work with partners to ensure labour market forecasts and trends are used to support careers education and to inform Year 9 choices. 	<p>Revised 14-19 Strategy produced, clearly showing links with Joint Area Review (JAR) findings and Children and Young People's Plans</p> <p>Year 11 Activity rates to increase by 2% in 2006-07</p> <p>Year 12 NEET rates to decrease to 9% in 2007-08</p> <p>The percentage of 19 year olds with a full level 2 to have increased to 69% by 2008</p> <p>Sustainability plans developed and in place for all districts by November 2006</p> <p>Detailed plan for locations and skill range to be covered by the network of centres</p> <p>A further 25 providers to attain subject membership during 2006-07</p> <p>Inclusion within area prospectus</p>

<p>Make learning truly demand led so that it meets the needs of employers, young people and adults</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills</p> <p>Matching the supply of training and related business support to the demands of employers and the wider economy</p>	<p>Continued improvements in employer engagement leading to increased training and investment remains a key priority. In order to achieve this outcome we will:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Regional Skills and Data teams to further refine the understanding of the skill needs of priority sectors 2. Work with providers and employers to develop the mix and balance of provision to reflect changing employer demand and SSA priority qualifications 3. Set individual targets with our FE network to ensure that either of the measures opposite are met 	<p>Sector data produced and communicated internally and throughout provider network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of retail employers prepared to invest in skills as the basis for increasing provision in future years • Health and Care Increased adult provision at Level 2 and 3 • Business and Public Services Increased Level 3 qualifications • Leisure and Tourism Targeted SFL and Level 2 provision • Construction Increased Level 3 provision and increased usage of OSAT delivery methods • Increased volumes of qualifications requested by SSCs - ITQ qualifications for IT users; BIT • With partners, deliver activity which supports the leadership and management strategy for Staffordshire <p>1 – A 10% funding allocation is made to deliver Level 2 during 2006/07, or</p> <p>2 – A 5% improvement target is set for providers who have already achieved a 10% target</p>
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	<p>4. Take forward the new responsibilities for the planning and funding of provision for offenders in custody and in the community</p> <p>5. Develop a specialist network that has a reputation for quality and responsiveness and which engages with employers effectively</p> <p>6. Deliver the 'Train to Gain' Programme</p> <p>7. Maintain strategic groups and employer forums which contribute to labour market intelligence</p> <p>8. Review Skills for Life Delivery Plan</p>	<p>Contracts in place to ensure smooth transition of responsibility from the Home Office to the LSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 specialist providers achieve Quality Mark status • Providers increase and gather 32.5% fee assumption from employers + 50% fee assumption for Level 3 <p>Employer engagement and qualification targets achieved:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 323 Hard to Reach employers • 310 New employers • 836 Level 2 qualifications • 70 Skills for Life qualifications • Establish a skills information and brokerage gateway for Staffordshire • Establish an interim brokerage service with regionally agreed targets <p>Transitional arrangements agreed with region, economic development partnerships and area partnerships</p> <p>Adoption of the revised Skills for Life delivery plan by the Strategic Skills for Life Network Group.</p>
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	<p>9. Review the remit and role of the Skills for Life Strategic Network to ensure representation of key partners at a senior level. Collaborative working with partners to ensure representation which encompasses 14 – 19 age range as well as adults 19+</p> <p>10. Increase the proportion of Skills for Life provision counting towards the national targets by 2010 (80% target)</p> <p>11. Work with Skills for Life providers to improve their current success rates</p>	<p>Ensure that Staffordshire Countywide Skills for Life needs are supported through the Staffordshire LAA. A programme has been identified and is currently running, this will continue to be reviewed to ensure that it is meeting the needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for Life providers to ensure that learners participate on programmes that count towards the national target showing year on year improvements to 2010. • Collaborate with Stoke-on-Trent City Council in the setting of City wide and Neighbourhood Skills for Life targets with a specific focus on Meir (as part of LAA block 4). Project to be enacted in 2006/07. • Whilst Staffordshire is well placed regionally with 7 of the 9 colleges operating above the 60% split on counting towards PSA targets, there is a need to focus on the 2 Colleges who are currently operating below the 60% split. Corrective action to be taken in 2006/07. <p>By July 2007 the current Skills for Life starters to achievers ratio of 1:3 is reduced to 1:2.4</p>
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	<p>12. Working with Skills for Life providers to ensure that they are making the required contributions to achieve Staffordshire's contribution to the National PSA milestone of 1.5 million adults by 2007</p> <p>13. Review capacity to deliver Skills for Life training and development for tutors</p> <p>14. To implement the regional arrangements to ensure the delivery of the ETE pathway and the procurement of the new OLASS (offender Learning and Skills Service) service.</p>	<p>By 2007 to achieve the Skills for Life local target for Staffordshire of 33,100 adults counting towards PSA targets.</p> <p>Ongoing work with the Professional Development Centre (PDC) to ensure opportunities are available for staff development and training to ensure Skills for Life tutors are qualified to the appropriate standard and that there is the correct distribution ratio of tutors between Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration between OLASS and the ETE pathway • The learning offer to offenders is equivalent to that in the mainstream • Produce a regional specification based on the Offender Learning Journey (OLJ) • Manage a process of procurement based on the OLJ specification • Implement a consistent and managed approach to offender learning regardless of funding streams
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	<p>15. Work with lead providers with responsibility for West Sector (North prison group – unit 3): to offer the same opportunities for appropriate provision and support to offenders as that available to other Staffordshire learners</p>	<p>Produce a plan to address the following :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custody – to determine the priorities in relation to learning and skills and issues for each of the prisons. • Community - to develop and build on the current partnership arrangements for delivering Skills for Life provision • Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) – to provide IAG support for offenders in the community and ensure the smooth data transfer across all areas of the Offender Learning Journey. To work with <i>nextstep</i> Staffordshire to ensure co-ordination of IAG provision for offenders in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
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<p>Transform the learning and skills sector through Agenda for Change</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify quality improvement targets and drive quality improvement initiatives throughout provider base 2. CoVE network actively engaged in the delivery of Train to Gain provision 3. Further develop the Aligning Planning and Resources agenda to include more use of self-assessment, business improvement and risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark level or better success rates achieved by providers in Retail, Leisure, Travel & Tourism and Business Admin • Providers achieving 'Quality Mark' <p>Success rates improved within CoVE network to meet national rates in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and Manufacturing • Construction • ICT <p>Providers produce new holistic SARs to a good standard to drive the 07/08 planning round. Perform QPIs for business improvement in place for 07/08 planning round</p>
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<p>Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help individuals into jobs</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Matching the supply of training and related business support to the demands of employers and the wider economy</p> <p>Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support reductions in economic inactivity by actively aligning with Jobcentre Plus plans 2. Ensure that investment in skills both informs and is aligned with LAA as they develop across the Staffordshire area 	<p>A revised joint working agreement and transition plan for programmes transferred to LSC agreed with Jobcentre Plus in 2006</p> <p>LSC priorities are reflected in LAA and related plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAA • Neighbourhood Renewal • Regeneration Zone • Housing Market Renewal • Children and Young People's plans • Lifelong Learning Networks
<p>Improve the skills of workers who are delivering public services</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Ensuring that employers and individuals fulfil their role in the investment in skills and training</p>	<p>Continued improvements in skills of workers who are delivering public services. We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with providers to align the mix and balance of provision to meet the needs of this sector 2. Engage with public service employers to increase their investment in workforce skills development 	<p>A minimum of 300 school support staff starting a Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of Health Sector, public sector and other employers delivering public services investing in learning to meet Knowledge and Skills Framework, IT system and other organisational changes from 44 to 80 • Workforce development plans agreed with public sector employers including which will include workforce skills improvement targets

<p>Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally</p> <p>Regional Priority</p> <p>Using a data driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills</p>	<p>To be recognised as the authoritative source locally of data and intelligence on the supply and demand of skills</p> <p>To lead and take forward the 2005/10 National Capital strategy which seeks to challenge the FE sector to develop world-class buildings for world-class teaching and learning aligning new developments to the local demand for provision</p>	<p>LSC local planning priorities are reflected in local partners' plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAA • Neighbourhood Renewal • Regeneration Zone • Housing Market Renewal • Children and Young People's plans <p>To address all capital investment requirements in FE estates by 2010. To submit for national approval at least two major capital bids in 2006/07</p>
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Our Delivery Resources

Equality and Diversity

The LSC will ensure that planned activities take account of its duty to promote equality of opportunity in relation to race, gender and disability and our responsibilities under other equality legislation including the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and European regulations relating to sexual orientation, religion or faith and age (due to come into effect in 2006). Our actions and activities which are covered in this plan will be underpinned by, and reflect, the Council's Race Equality Scheme. The local office will work in partnership with colleagues at a Regional and National level to support the process of Equality Impact Assessments across all functional areas.

Equality and Diversity has been successfully embedded into Staffordshire LSC's full Council meetings and the three current local Council Sub Committees: Audit; Strategic Planning and Performance Review. Staffordshire LSC will continue to promote the embedding of Equality and Diversity to ensure it forms a part of all future Council related activity under Agenda for Change.

Workforce Goals

The following table outlines the Workforce Diversity Goals for the LSC's own workforce and Staffordshire LSC's progress against them.

Total Headcount for Staffordshire LSC = 51	
LSC Workforce Diversity Goals	Staffordshire LSC's current data
Increase the proportion of women in senior roles (Band 3 and above) to 51% by 2010. (Baseline Sept 2002 – 43.8%)	Total number of Band 3+ roles = 19 Total number of females in Band 3+ roles = 9 Total percentage of females in Band 3+ roles = 47.37%
Increase by 50% the proportion of men in Band 1 roles by 2010 (Baseline Sept 2002 – 19%.)	Total number of Band 1 roles = 11 Total number of males in Band 1 roles = 1 Total percentage of males in Band 1 roles = 9.09%
Ensure that by 2010, at least 9.1% of the LSC's workforce will come from non-white ethnic minorities (Baseline Sept 2002 = 7.2%)	Total number of non-white ethnic minorities = 0 Total percentage of non-white ethnic minorities = 0%
Double the proportion of ethnic minorities in senior roles (Band 3 and above) by 2010. (Baseline Sept 2002 - 3.8%)	Total number of ethnic minorities = 0 Total Percentage of ethnic minorities = 0%
Double, by 2010, the proportion of LSC employees who consider themselves to have a disability or limiting illness. (Baseline Sept 2002 = 3.37%)	Total number of Staffordshire LSC employees considering themselves to have a disability or limiting illness = 0 Total percentage of Staffordshire LSC employees considering themselves to have a disability or limiting illness = 0%

Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs)

The West Midlands' LSCs have agreed a set of common regional EDIM themes. This standardised approach will enable LSC's to assess progress of the EDIMs against the local and regional strategies and targets and will allow for local and regional aggregation of impact.

These themes provide local LSCs and providers with a standardised framework on which to set EDIMs. The model encourages local LSCs and providers to adopt the regionally agreed measures, but allows for the setting of EDIMs which address specific local issues.

EDIMs have now been included in providers' 2006/07 contracts.

EDIMs

Participation

- Improve parity of participation amongst those 16-19 learners who are underrepresented

To increase the number of learners in the following identified underrepresented Groups

Current Local Priority

Work through the 14-19 colleges and collaboratives to utilise opportunities for ESF support to develop innovative strategies for disaffected 14-19 year olds.

Work with the providers in Stoke-on-Trent to explore the potential to pilot new curriculum offers and delivery strategies to engage those hard to reach young people

Work with providers in Staffordshire to develop more effective strategies for retention and progression of those young people most at risk of dropping out at 17

Implement an extensive and innovative pilot in the North Staffordshire area to address the language deficit experienced by many young people and which we believe significantly affects progression at 17 and the achievement of the Level 2 at 19 PSA target.

Background Data

Underrepresented ethnic groups at 16-18 in Further Education in the Staffordshire LSC area

Ethnicity	02/03	03/04	04/05	Census 2001 (16-19)
White - any other White background	91.2%	91.4%	88.8%	94.8%

Underrepresented gender groups at 16-18 in Further Education in the Staffordshire LSC area

Gender	02/03	03/04	04/05	Census 2001 (16-19)
Male	46.9%	45.9%	46.9%	51.3%

Underrepresented ethnic groups at 16-18 in Work Based Learning in the Staffordshire LSC area

Ethnicity	02/03	03/04	04/05	Census 2001 (16-19)
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%	2.9%

Underrepresented gender groups at 16-18 in Work Based Learning in the Staffordshire LSC area

Gender	02/03	03/04	04/05	Census 2001 (16-19)
Female	43.0%	41.2%	41.6%	48.7%

Achievement

- Improve success rates amongst those groups of learners where rates are below national benchmark

To identify those cohorts of learners whose rates are below national benchmarks
Targets to be determined through 3 year development plans.

FE learners below national benchmarks by Ethnicity in the Staffordshire LSC area

Ethnicity %	B/mark				
	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2002/03	2003/04
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	58	63	73	65	70
Asian or Asian British - Indian	62	66	68	70	72
Black or Black British - any other Black background	51	70	55	57	63
Mixed - White and Black African	38	66	71	60	64
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	53	56	63	60	64
White - British	64	67	69	67	70

FE learners below national benchmarks by Gender in the Staffordshire LSC area

Gender	Age Band	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2002/03	2003/04
Female	16-18	66	69	72	69	71
Male	16-18	58	64	66	69	72

Employer Related

- Increase the number of older workers (aged 45+) benefiting from training designed to upskill and reskill thus enabling participants to continue to be economically active
- Increase the number Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) businesses engaging with LSC funded activities

Increase the number of older workers (aged 45+) benefiting from training

Number 45+ learners engaging training In the Staffordshire LSC area.

2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
24593	23243	21683

The data outlined shows that the number of 45+ learners is decreasing. Work will be carried out with local providers in order to reengage these learners and to promote the benefits of lifelong learning.

Increase the number Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) businesses engaging with LSC funded activities

The local office has been working with the Minority Business Association in order to identify to analyse the number of BME businesses that engage with LSC funded activities. Notably this research will also enable the local office to identify the businesses that do not engage with the local office and will outline ways in which it can better engage these businesses in the future.

Imbalances in Learning

Address gender imbalances in provision on FE and WbL programmes in occupational sectors as follows:

Women in Building Technology and Engineering Trades

Men in Health and Social Care

To work with providers and SSCs to identify appropriate strategies to remove barriers enabling more learners to access non traditional trades.

FE	Gender	0203	0304	0405
Construction	Female	5.5%	7.9%	4.0%
	Male	94.5%	92.1%	96.0%
Engineering, Technology and Manufact	Female	25.1%	14.4%	26.3%
	Male	74.9%	85.6%	73.7%
Health, Social Care and Public Servs	Female	63.9%	63.1%	64.3%
	Male	36.1%	36.9%	35.7%

WBL	Gender	0203	0304	0405
Construction	Female	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%
	Male	99.3%	99.5%	99.6%
Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing	Female	4.6%	2.6%	3.1%
	Male	95.4%	97.4%	96.9%
Health, Social Care and Public Services	Female	45.8%	43.7%	65.2%
	Male	54.2%	56.3%	34.8%

Quality of Data

To reduce the percentage of “Not Knowns” in FE Individual Learner Records (ILRs)

To improve the destination data recorded on ILRs in WbL and FE

To identify those Colleges whose level of 16-18 disability not knowns is high.

		16-18	19+
		%	%
2002/03	Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	10%	8%
	learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	63%	66%
	no information provided by the learner	27%	26%
		100%	100%
2003/04	Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	9%	11%
	learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	64%	69%
	no information provided by the learner	27%	20%
		100%	100%
2004/05	Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	10%	10%
	learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty/disability/ health problem.	69%	78%
	no information provided by the learner	21%	12%
		100%	100%

The Local office will work with local FE providers to encourage them to reduce the overall “no information provided by the learner”.

Work-based Learner data has been analysed and there are no immediate issues to be addressed with regard to the collection of learner details.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of learners is a fundamental value for the Learning and Skills Council. We believe that learners are entitled to learning that takes place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. Our policy is to adopt a “best practice” role with regard to the promotion of learner health and safety, by applying the following four core principles:

- to expect that colleges and other providers funded by the Council will fully meet their legal obligations and “duty of care” to learners;
- to seek assurance that colleges and other providers have suitable and sufficient arrangements for learner health and safety;
- to take appropriate action where expected standards are not met or maintained;
- to promote the raising of standards for learner health and safety through support, and challenge, as appropriate.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD)

The Region has commissioned a review of provision and support for LLDD learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. This Review, chaired by the Executive Director for Coventry and Warwickshire LSC, will bring forward recommendations for the development of provision to better meet the needs of learners within the region, as far as is possible, for the further development of the network of specialist providers to meet the needs of those who need specialist and residential provision, and for development work to improve the ability of mainstream providers to meet the needs of a wider range of LLDD learners.

In addition, the region is working with the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) to develop a support strategy for learners with visual impairments and is hosting a secondee from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) to coordinate the West Midlands Mental Health Network.

Sustainable Development

The LSC has a huge opportunity to make a difference to sustainable development. If the messages and actions of our own organisation; those with which we work; and the learners which we fund could be adapted, then we have a strong role to play. In 2005, we published a strategy for sustainable development, *From Here to Sustainability*.

Our vision is that the learning and skills sector will proactively commit and contribute to sustainable development through its management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with communities.

In order to do this we must address the issues around environmental sustainability and use our influence, funding and approaches to achieve this vision. Although sustainable development is about much more than halting climate change and environmental considerations, tackling this agenda will go along way to making the LSC's vision a reality. The West Midlands is playing a strong lead in ensuring that the issues are addressed in a robust and meaningful way as follows:

- Ensuring that our own, and our providers' internal ways of working are environmentally sustainable, e.g. converting to more environmentally friendly fuel options, adopting the principles of reducing, reusing and recycling waste
- Ensuring that the principles of sustainability are embedded into the curriculum and qualifications which we fund, e.g. by requiring learners to undertake the sustainability option where there is currently a choice within the qualification. Further examples relate to using each curriculum area to further learners understanding of climate change issues through relevant issues within their chosen vocations e.g. better construction methods, treatment of chemicals for hairdressers
- Ensuring that we are building the principles into our skills strategy by making the link between sustainability and the industries important to it, e.g. recognising the need of employers within the renewable energy sector
- Sourcing examples of good practice and using this as a basis for further awareness raising

Staffordshire LSC is taking the lead on this issue regionally and is the representative for all local offices on the national implementation group.

Partnership Working

Sharing Data and Aligning Plans

The Staffordshire Skills Alliance, led by the LSC is a partnership of employers, stakeholders and strategic funding agencies that work together to improve skills and economic development within Staffordshire. This group have produced a Skills Strategy for Staffordshire and have supported activity to improve employer engagement, management and leadership and access to skills information.

Sector data has been shared with the FE and private provider network to inform the planning and delivery process. This data is supplemented by local intelligence emerging from the employer forums established in priority sectors.

Staffordshire LSC has worked with Jobcentre Plus to develop a joint plan of action. This plan is currently under review and will be subject to revision to reflect changes in priorities and responsibilities.

The Regeneration Zone has utilised sector data and labour market intelligence to develop the North Staffordshire Zone Implementation Plan. Implementation plans maximise the capital funds of the Zone to the revenue spend of the LSC.

Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI)

The LEGI was announced in the 2005 budget. It is designed to provide funding to the most deprived areas (determined by neighbourhood renewal fund areas) for enterprise development activity. In 2006/07 £50 million is available nationally, rising to £150 million 2008/09. It is expected that area allocations will range from £2-10 million and that participation will be determined through a competitive selection process based on the quality of the proposal and the tangible outputs for the area. The selection process is being managed by Government Office and the Regional Development Agency network to ensure that proposals support existing strategies i.e. the Regional Economic Strategy, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Local Public Service Agreement and LAA. Staffordshire LSC is actively collaborating with both local authorities (Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire County Council) in the development of LAAs and is working with Stoke-on-Trent Council and North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone on the development of a LEGI bid aimed at providing pre-employment skills, training in Skills for Life, vocational training and qualifications to adults who are unemployed, returning to the work place.

Promoting Learning

The learning and skills agenda has been promoted through a structured marketing and promotions plan. Activities have included sponsorship of The Sentinel Business Awards (the leading sub regional newspaper) and the Staffordshire Apprenticeship Awards in partnership with the Staffordshire Provider Association.

Economic Development

There are huge opportunities to make a real difference to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent economies by linking in to some exciting and broad ranging initiatives. In North Staffordshire, the area is a designated Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (RENEW). With the combined effect of the Regeneration Zone, this has the potential to change the image of the area and lead to a step change in the area's aspirations. Not only will there be specific skills needs resulting from the infrastructure developments (e.g Construction) but there are clear links with community learning, Skills for Life and increasing the overall skills base of the area. There are opportunities to embed skills development into the visionary proposals for RENEW and to contribute to the development of the University Quarter.

In partnership with Southern Staffordshire Partnership exciting prospect, the economic regeneration strategy for this area identifies the positive impact that the M6 toll road is already having in attracting new investment and enabling the connectivity of businesses, the community and visitors. The LSC is working with its providers to develop a learning and skilful sub-region that aligns to the areas business base. During the last 12 months the LSC has supported the establishment of a Business and Professional employer's forum and played an active role in the development of a partnership group focussed on the development of the tourism and visitor economy. The Leisure and Tourism sector is now a priority sector for the area given the need for rural towns to address the diversification agenda.

Southern Staffordshire is also a champion of the environmental and sustainability agenda with a number of innovative programmes being supported by the Regional Development Agency. This work also complements the lead the LSC has taken with a local FE college in supporting a sustainability research project to establish baselines and best practice.

Employer Engagement

Employer forums have been established in priority sectors to provide an opportunity for employers to articulate their skill needs and to provide an opportunity for the LSC to test out research propositions. To maximise employer participation these forums have been developed in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce and the Minority Business Association (MBA). The issues emerging are shared with the provider base through a network of 'Delivery Partnerships'. Wherever possible the delivery partnerships have been developed around the CoVE network, providing an opportunity for a collaborative response to the sector or the exchange of information and best practice.

Service Delivery

Business Link are contracted to deliver employer engagement programmes i.e. Employer Skills Offer, Director Development Programme. To increase employer engagement and responsiveness the LSC has facilitated joint working between Business Link, FE and private providers.

Skills programmes funded through ESF i.e. ETP and Adult Apprenticeships are being delivered through a consortium of FE and private providers.

Stoke-on-Trent University Quarter

The University Quarter is a key regeneration project for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. The overriding mission of the Quarter is *education-led regeneration*. The project combines the physical regeneration (£100m+) of a run-down area of the City Centre with an initiative by Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent College and the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, the LSC, LA and local/regional development agencies working together in a unique partnership to raise educational expectations, aspirations and attainment within the local area. The key aims of the University Quarter are to:

- Raise educational aspirations in the City of Stoke-on-Trent by providing high-quality learning opportunities
- Increase access to and widen participation in FE and HE, training and lifelong learning
- Provide clear progression routes and remove barriers to progression by establishing a variety in the curriculum offer
- Develop and raise the skills of the City's existing workforce by engaging the private sector in training and partnership
- Stimulate inward investment, securing the City's economic future, by supporting the development of an enterprising and innovative city
- Support the existing City community and attract new residents by working with partners to ensure the physical transformation of the City

Staffordshire LSC is a key partner in this initiative and is working with partners to move the project forward both on the substance of the educational vision and in capital investment in local educational infrastructure.

14-19 Collaboration

The LSC and both LAs along with other partners have agreed an overarching strategy for developing 14-19 work across the LSC area. Oversight of the promotion, development and implementation of the strategy is carried out by a 14-19 Steering Group which includes representation at a senior level from all partners. The LSC has provided funds to support co-ordination, development and delivery of the strategy at district level.

The implementation of the strategy has therefore devolved to district level where partners have developed action plans for taking forward the strategy in a way which takes account of local circumstances. In this way we have achieved a shared commitment, a common purpose and set of goals and yet retained the required flexibility in delivery which is necessary when working in areas as diverse as the City of Stoke-on-Trent and the Staffordshire Moorlands. Three districts have established formal collegiate structures.

This collaboration has resulted in large numbers of young people being able to access a much broader curriculum at Key Stages 4 and 5 and many young people in the area now access their learning package from more than one provider

Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

Over the past two years the LSC/Staffordshire Probation Area (SPA) have had a Partnership Plan which supported the delivery of basic skills provision for Offenders in the community. The delivery of this service is provided through mainstream provider base i.e. colleges and some Work-based Learning providers, and the supporting services by the SPA. The SPA employs four Basic Skills (BS) specialist staff – two Education Officers (who conduct initial assessments and risk assessments); two BS Support Workers (who transport and introduce offenders to providers) and has seconded Mentors (who maintain contact with every offender and report back on attendance or Failure To Attend [FTA]).

SPA supervises approximately 5,500 offenders per annum and about 70% of these will be subject to Community Orders, with most of the remainder being released from custody during the year. Offenders in Staffordshire are split on approximately a 50/50 basis between young people and adults, with 90% being male and 3% coming from the ethnic minority community (this reflects Staffordshire population). The majority have no qualifications. During 2004/05 the Partnership had 617 Starts on Basic Skills programmes against a target of 604 with 173 Awards against a target of 151. This success has been built upon in 2005/06 and to date there has been 643

Starts against a target of 761 (84%) with 213 Awards against a target of 190 (112%).

This provision is going to be further developed in 2006/07 with the roll-out of the LSC OLASS provision, which intends to co-ordinate the delivery of skills across the whole of the offender agenda i.e. custody and community. This will ensure that IAG services, data transfer and continuity of provision is facilitated across the whole of the region.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

The national *Working Together* strategy recognised the VCS as a provider, employer and source of expertise, and sought to identify the ways of working that might be adopted to achieve shared aims. Within Staffordshire the size and diversity of the County, and the issues that face it, clearly strategically places the VCS at the heart of most of the initiatives developed to address these needs.

In order to help facilitate this, Staffordshire LSC, over the past year, have developed and consulted on a local *Working Together* Strategy, and more recently produced a *Manifesto*. These two documents highlight the key areas for developing mutually beneficial frameworks for engaging and supporting the 'hard to reach' groups, rural and BME communities. More specifically these development areas include building the capacity and skills base; developing the potential for the provision of IAG; and supporting learners in meeting their basic skills needs. We see the Community and Voluntary Services (CVS) as one of the key elements for this, through the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO) and its local sector training and development service, *Learnability*, alongside the engagement of the wider sector as a whole.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Within the last 18 months the Staffordshire IAG Strategic Board has evolved from being primarily in place to steer the local LSC/IAG deliver plan for adults, to one in which it is developing a broader, more coherent service across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, regardless of funder or funding stream. Partnership involvement has been expanded to include a wider representative group e.g. public sector employers, probation, voluntary and community representatives, HE and FE colleagues.

The vision of creating a 'no wrong door' policy is predicated by ensuring that IAG services are clearly focussed on the delivery of the Skills Strategy, headline business activities of all stakeholders, commissioning of research or setting up of focus groups, promotion and raising awareness of IAG development in general and the consideration of the appropriateness or need for income generated services alongside publicly funded services. A strategy has been developed and information/data research is ongoing.

Rural Issues:

In addition to the LSC priorities underpinning the Annual Plan 2006-7, it is expected that the following areas of activity will also actively promote

effective partnership working and the maximising of existing resources. There is an increasing need to be aware of the local implications of changing demographic patterns in the country, and of the growing emphasis upon work-based and work-related learning. Progression opportunities in learning and training should be clearly articulated, and should include linkages through to HE, including those routes currently being developed through Lifelong Learning Network initiatives. Finally, all areas of activity should interlink with each other and be clearly grounded within a coherent and integrated strategy, rather than representing a collection of well meaning but essentially 'ad hoc' projects.

- **14-19 Team** Improve the participation and achievement of young people in rural areas, and widen the choice of vocational routes.
- **Adult Learning Team / 14-19 Team** Project developing an integrated strategy to address the issues facing isolated rural learners. Managed from Rodbaston College, this project will employ three development workers with a remit to develop activities across the rural districts of the Staffordshire LSC area. This project is distinctive in that it has purposefully drawn together and responded to concerns relating to all cohorts of learners in rural communities, recognising the importance of early intervention and the critical role of broad-based partnerships. The project will therefore address three integrated themes. Engaging with learners at risk of dropping out from school; engaging with NEET young people from rural backgrounds, and providing linkages through to rural training provision. Engaging with adults in rural areas, with particular reference to taster sessions, basic skills referrals, and Level 2 opportunities.
- **Adult Learning Team** Strengthen local area planning to optimise access and progression. Building on the successful work undertaken in 2005-06, while also consolidating a sustainable exit strategy. This activity will extend the provision of IAG within areas of identified greatest need. Within this framework, provision and IAG strands will be developed particularly in the Moorlands and South Staffordshire areas, supported through the regional WAPF initiative.
- **Workforce Skills Team** The development and application of a model for engagement with employers in rural areas, to identify and address skills gaps and shortages.
- **Adult Learning Team** To support and facilitate the development of a skilled and flexible workforce in rural areas, with particular regard to initial engagement, basic skills, and Level 2 qualifications. This objective will be pursued through three areas of activity. Firstly, the LSC will review the current arrangements for mobile learning opportunities within rural areas, the majority of which are not in receipt of LSC funding. The LSC will therefore seek to promote co-ordinated activity between the providers, brokering more partnership working in order to maximise learning opportunities in areas of highest need. Secondly, the LSC will facilitate and lead a review of the changing needs of market towns, and

the implications for learning and training provision. A pilot study will be focussed on Biddulph to identify the issues and develop the partnerships best equipped to address them. Thirdly, in consultation with various partners, including the relevant LSPs, the potential contribution of the 'Learning Communities approach' within rural communities will be assessed and promoted where appropriate.

Ufi/learn direct

In order to help to minimise the impact of reduction in funding for Adult provision, review with partners and Ufi the role of *learn direct* and how this could support gaps in provision. Where appropriate, to broker partnership working between the Ufi and others, including both statutory providers and the VCS. Integral to this is a review of existing projects within the Adult Learning Team, and exploring the potential to integrate Ufi provision where it would support or add value to the activity. The focus will be on the delivery of short courses of below 9 hours and Skills for Life First Test passes.

The LSC will seek to promote a co-ordinated approach between Ufi, FE Colleges and other providers to ensure that progression routes will be in place for learners who have accessed these courses.

Local Council and the Contribution of the local Non Executive

The local Council members play a key role in developing and agreeing the strategies and plans for the LSC in Staffordshire. All members are committed to ensuring these local strategies contribute to the achievement of regional and national priorities and targets by better meeting the needs of learners and the skill needs of the local economy.

Full Council meetings inform, influence and approve the work that is carried out by the Executive and they are the formal mechanisms that approve the work carried out in Sub Committees.

The Full Council and three Sub Committees, Audit, Strategic Planning and Performance Review all contribute effectively to ensure that the organisation successfully meets its strategic objectives.

The Strategic Planning Sub Committee informs and influences the strategic planning of the local office to ensure Staffordshire LSC fulfils its local priorities and the national priorities set out in the Annual Statement of Priorities. The Performance Review Sub Committee Oversees the performance of the local office in terms of operational achievement of local and national targets, funding allocations and effectiveness. The Audit Committee advises the Executive Director on the effectiveness of the local LSC's whole system of internal control, including controls for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Council Members also play a leading role in the communication and dissemination of our strategies and plans at planned events and through their own networks.

The Local Council is essential to ensuring the local LSCs retain their effectiveness and focus on meeting need in the LSC area and will be proactive in ensuring it remains effective through Agenda for Change.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The six LSCs in the West Midlands have joined together for the first time to manage the UK's first regional co-financing scheme to deliver the ESF. During 2006/07 we will seek to procure activity worth approximately £60 million across the region. This funding will be used to address both regional and local skills issues.

ESF focuses on improving people's skills and employment opportunities. It is aimed at helping three key groups:

- Social minorities and excluded groups – including, helping long term unemployed, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, ex-offenders and people lacking basic skills needed to get a job.
- Businesses – helping to boost workforce productivity and the West Midlands economy by supporting the Regional Skills Partnership aim to develop a highly and appropriately skilled workforce.
- Local communities – helping to cut unemployment in the benefit claims, upskilling communities and helping them to become more sustainable in the long term.

How we work with college governors

As a local LSC we have regular meetings between LSC Directors and College Principals and Chairs. We have specific briefings for College Principals and Chairs to communicate LSC strategic priorities and other key information. LSC directors also attend college Governor away days.

One Chair of governors, one FE College Governor and one Governor of Staffordshire University sit as LSC Council members.

College financial health – issues and actions

The colleges in Staffordshire are in relatively strong financial health, although many have been challenged by the funding priorities, unfunded in year growth in 16 - 18 year old students and fees policy. A number of colleges are going through significant restructures of provision and staffing in order to meet the challenges ahead, including the financial challenges. There are no colleges receiving exceptional support, although one college has recently recovered from a category C rating. The largest college has recently moved into category C as a result of prospective capital and interest repayment requirements,

Re-aligning of their provision and a historic repayment dating back to 1996 which has reduced the amount of surplus' the college has been able to generate to support their ambitious capital improvements. The college is not likely to require exceptional support as it has put in necessary plans to maintain priority provision and to move the college forward as an employer centred college focusing on key skill areas in North Staffordshire. Those colleges in category B are not at risk of moving into category C in the medium term.

City Regions

The County of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Unitary Authority are not involved in City Region developments. However, Stoke-on-Trent is exploring the possibility of City Region status.

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